To support those facing food insecurity, the federal government launched programs like the SNAP & WIC.

SNAP
Provides food assistance to low-income families that are unable to purchase food. SNAP is administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

WIC
Offers supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education to low-income pregnant and recently pregnant people, infants, and children up to age 5 at nutritional risk.

These programs are often insufficient and recipients rely on additional resources from local charitable organizations to meet nutritional needs.

In 2021, 14% of Durham County residents were food insecure. Of respondents:
- 39% Hispanic/Latinx
- 15% Black
- 7% White

Research Objectives
- Gain further insight into food accessibility/food insecurity among Durham residents
- Understand residents’ use of federal food programs (SNAP and WIC) and local resources to uncover possible participant preferences
- Explore capacities of organizations providing local food resources to meet Durham residents’ needs

Methods

Organizations Case Study
- Comparative Case Study Design:
  - 2 Durham food security organizations
  - 3 distribution observations
  - 6 volunteer interviews

Organizations A:
- Monthly drive-up distribution to over 150 families
- Food sourced from regional food bank through federal program
- Religious affiliation
- Community-led

Organization B:
- Food-as-medicine approach; targeting nutrition insecurity
- Weekly delivery and walk-up distribution to over 200 families
- Variety of food sources: local grocery stores; local farmers' markets

Community Feedback

“I have to be here at 7am in order to get a good place in line that open at 9am... when it is cold or bad weather, there are people that do not have vehicles like I do with young children.”

“Food insecurity is very prevalent among the older population.”

“Food as medicine... it's not just about the food.”

“Food insecurity is a big challenge.”

“Access to food is a big issue.”

“SNAP and WIC are really essential.”

“SNAP and WIC are really essential for the community.”

“Many organizations are working hard to prevent food insecurity.”

“SNAP and WIC are really important.”

Recommendations

Organizational Level
- Institutionalize volunteer structures
- Provide resources to clients for SNAP/WIC and other local resources
- Leverage community relationships to support clients’ nutritional needs holistically (e.g., connect clients to resources beyond nutrition assistance)
- Partner with local food vendors to increase predictability of supply and divert food waste

Policy Level
- Expand eligibility requirements for SNAP (income, citizenship) to bridge gaps between food insecurity and SNAP enrollment
- Increase funding and capacity building efforts to local organizations that address food insecurity in unique ways (e.g., fresh fruit, transportation)
- Reduce administrative burden involved in programs like SNAP

Acknowledgements & References

Our team would like to thank the community members and organization representatives who shared their experiences. Scan the QR Code for more information.